United Nations A/HRC/28/NGO/41

General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 February 2015

English only

Human Rights Council
Twenty-eighth session
Agenda item 4
Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 February 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.15-02933 (E)

1502933

Please recycle

Situation of Women in Islamic Republic of Iran

Over the last few decades, women have experienced a lot of developments. With the rise in their awareness and education levels, they have increased their capacities, and no longer can they be marginalized in political-social participation.

In Iran, as the cultural acceptance of women participation in society enhances, women's education gradually and has continually had a growth. In the 1978-79 school year the total number of university students in the country was 175,675, 30.8 percent of which were girls. The total number of state run and private sector university and higher education students for the year 1996-1997 reached 1,193,538; 38.5 percent of which were girls.

In 2000-01 the total number of university students reached 1,577,000, 47.3 percent of which were girls. In 2011 this number reached to 4,117,208 in the country, approximately 60 percent of which were girls.

The education level of women can also be assessed based on literacy level index. In 1976, the women literacy level was only 36 percent in comparison to the literacy level of men (59 percent), which shows a 23 percent gap. The literacy level of women reached 72 percent in 1996 and 81 percent in 2006, and this gap was quite notably reduced and reached 8 percent (89 percent for men and 81 percent for women). According to today's statistics the literacy level of women has exceeded 96 percent.

According to articles 19, 20 and 21 of the Iranian Constitution, race, skin color, language etc. cannot cause distinction and discrimination among the people of Iran, and all individuals of the nation including men and women are equally protected by law, and enjoy all human, political, economic, social and cultural rights, with the observation of Islamic principles. Therefore discrimination against women for entrance to university or allocating some scientific fields of study to men is contradictory to the Constitution and unjustifiable.

Furthermore, due to a number of reasons such as economic, compensation of shortage of income and increasing the purchasing power of the family, independence and safety for their future, women work in society.

As half of the population of the country, the participation of women in economic activities not only had a key role in the development of women's capacities and potentials, but also played an important role in the economic and social development of the Iranian society. Therefore half of the nation's manpower cannot be ignored. All members of society, including men and women must have equal opportunities and strong impetus to participate in economic activities, in order for a society to get developed, therefore the employment of women has a special status within the domestic Iranian laws; such as articles 3, 20, 21, 28, 29 and 43 of the Constitution and the Islamic Republic of Iran's Perspective for 2025, the Women's Rights and Responsibilities Charter, the Fourth and Fifth Development Programs, and other laws and legislations.

Women in Iran have always been present in various social and political arenas shoulder to shoulder with men. But this presence had never turned into a serious participation in social, economic and political arenas. But in the recent years with fundamental political, economic and social changes that took place in the country, women's inclinations towards technology, knowledge and entrepreneurship has increased.

The number of Iranian women active in the economy in 1986 was less than one million, the figure reached 1,630,000, 1,765,000, and in 1991 and 1996 respectively. And rose to 4 million in 2005. This increase in the number of employed women shows Iranian women's interest in working and participation in the economy side by side with men, and suitable and positive policy settings towards boosting the entrance of professional and literate workforce into the society. Because the majority of women in employment in Iran are literate. But in the years between 2006 till 2011 the number of working women dropped approximately by 900,000. This was due to the country's economic problems, and the negative effects of the unilateral economic sanctions imposed by the US and the European Union on Iran on the excuse of the country's nuclear activities.

Nonetheless, according to information published from the public census of 2011, 30 percent of working women are experts, the majority of which are working in the public and governmental sectors.

Also from another aspect, the comparison of girl post graduates and higher education centers of the country to the total of post graduates (46.5) with the ratio of professional working women to all working professionals (44.9) shows that most of the women with higher education are drawn into the employment market and a small part of them have not entered the employment market due to various reasons such as the individual's lack of interest to work, and or the person's skills not be relevant to the needs of the employment market. In other words to enter employment market, women have further need for skills and higher education and this is one of the main reasons for women's interest in going to university.

The daily increasing successes of women in various scientific, managerial and arts fields indicates self belief and the activeness of their inner capacities. Increase in the education levels of women over the past years has resulted their social participation to be of better quality.

Therefore our NGO offers the following recommendations to the country authorities for improvement of women's situation in the country:

1. Due to reasons such as extensive women presence in higher education and the budget that is spent on it, personal choices and interests in having a social presence and ultimately because women need to earn money, the authorities, including the government and the parliament must facilitate women's employment, which can be the best strategy for women's empowerment and enhanced social participation of women.

2. Women's increasing achievements in different fields of science, management and art indicates their self-confidence and realization of their potentials. Women's accomplishments in education has helped them to have a better presence in society. Along with the change of managers' views toward women, we need to make correct use of opportunities and resources to improve women's situation. We also need to consider women's issues as a common challenge and pay serious attention to women's health, hygiene and sports.

3. Solving of women's issues requires preparation of an action package and this package should include determination and development of employment opportunities, marriage, civil support, strengthening of moral relationships in the family, enhance women interest to enter society, coordination be made between government agencies in creation and support for jobs and skills and training opportunities.